

Minutes of the Wolters Field Advisory Committee Meeting
June 8, 2016

I. Call to Order

At approximately 7:00 pm Co-Chair Michelle Holleman called the meeting to order.
Location: Highland Park City Hall, 1707 St. Johns Ave., Highland Park.

II. Roll Call of Advisory Group Members

In Attendance

Judith Magel Cohen
Mindy Deutsch
Michele Goldstein
John Helander
Scott Liberman
Chief Paul Shafer
Joel Fontane
Jon Rowley
Eileen McMahon
Michelle Holleman
Julie Gordon

Absent

None

Nine neighborhood residents also attended the meeting, per the sign-in sheet.

III. Approval of November 5, 2015 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Julie Gordon

Second: Chief Shafer

Ayes: Shafer, Fontane, Rowley, McMahon, Holleman, Gordon

Nays: None

Motion passes; minutes of November 5, 2015 meeting approved.

IV. Scheduled Business

a. **Welcome and Introductions**

Co-chair Holleman welcomed the five new resident members of the Advisory Group, and explained their expected 2-year tenure on the group.

Members of the Advisory Group introduced themselves and explained their connection to Wolters Field. Below is a summary of the Advisory Group members:

Co-Chairs:

- Michelle Holleman – Highland Park City Councilman
- Julie Gordon – Township High School District 113 – Member, Board of Education

Residents:

- Judith Magel Cohen
- Mindy Deutsch
- Michele Goldstein
- John Helander
- Scott Liberman

City Staff Liaisons:

- Paul Shafer – Chief of Police
- Joel Fontane – Director of Community Development

District 113 Staff Liaisons:

- Jon Rowley – Highland Park High School Athletic Director (AD)
- Eileen McMahon – Highland Park High School Assistant Principal

b. **Purpose / Mission of the Wolters Field Advisory Group**

Co-Chair Gordon shared that Wolters Field is zoned as R5, which is residential with a Special Use Permit (allows certain things based on the ordinance that sets forth the special uses of that establishment). This zoning is similar to Ravinia Festival.

She explained that the ordinance setting forth the Special Use Permit provides specific detail on many aspects of Wolters Field usage, including the responsibilities of the Wolters Field Advisory Group. As specified in Ordinance 81-13, G5, she explained that the Advisory Group’s responsibility is to review the impact on the surrounding neighborhood, if any, of a) the lights; b) sound emanating from the Property and c) vehicular traffic related to Lighted Events at the Property. In conducting such a review, the Advisory Group shall take into account the educational, extracurricular, and psychosocial needs of the District and its students. The Advisory Group shall present, and the City and the District shall consider, the issues, concerns and recommendations identified in the course of such review.

Gordon stated that changes to the ordinance need to be recommended by this group, and then ultimately approved by the City and the District.

Gordon stated that there is naturally going to be friction over the use of Wolters Field, given the location of the field and the needs of the district. But that it is the responsibility of this group to discuss these issues and make recommendations.

c. **Ordinance 81-13: Special Use Permit Details**

Co-Chair Holleman passed out a handout that summarizes the Wolters Field Special Use Permit, and walked the group through the various sections. She clarified that this handout was reviewed by the City’s lawyers and prepared for the November 2015 meeting, so that some of the information in this handout (e.g., names of residents on the Advisory Group) is outdated.

A copy of the updated summary is attached to these minutes.

d. Spring Activities – Overview by District and City Staff

Jon Rowley, HPHS Athletic Director, stated that it was a great spring for activities and provided an overview of Wolters Field usage this spring, including:

- There are a total of 27 sports at HPHS. There are 7 different sports that utilize Wolters Field in the spring, including Boys Baseball, Girls Softball, Boys and Girls Track and Field, Boys and Girls Lacrosse, and Girls Soccer. For each sport, there are often multiple teams (e.g., Freshman, JV, Varsity).
- There were 5 lighted events this spring for a total of 13 for the year (the Ordinance allows 17).
- There were 4 twilight events this spring, for a total of 9 for the year (the Ordinance allows 44).
- Wolters Field is a large field with multiple entry points, making it somewhat difficult to manage. On afternoons where we have competitions, either Jon or his assistant AD, Colleen Boilini, are on site to help with site management.
- There were 21 dates during the spring when we had 4-6 different events going on. Parking lots fill up quickly on these dates and attendees had to find parking elsewhere.
- On 6 different occasions the district hired 3 security personnel to help manage traffic/parking, which helped.

Mr. Rowley stated that the Wolters Field facility is beautiful, and it's great to see so many kids involved in activities there.

Paul Shafer, HP Chief of Police, provided updates on the following:

- From September to current, there were 4 noise reports that officially went through dispatch, 3 of which were related to Wolters Field.
- There were also reports of 4 parking violations, where tickets were issued if the police were able to get to the car before it was moved.
- Jon Rowley reported to the police 2 cars inappropriately parked in handicapped parking (these were then moved by the owners).

Wolters Field neighbor Jeff Gilbert reported that the noise reports that go to the police are likely lower because neighbors have been asked to report these concerns directly to Jon Rowley.

e. Athletic Lane Usage

Co-Chair Gordon gave an update on dust proofing of Athletic Lane to reduce dust when the lane is used for traffic/parking. She stated that the Ordinance requires dust proofing, but to her knowledge, this has not been done in the past. The District is committed to doing this in the future.

She reported that the District has received a quote for dustproofing and that the request is now with the City engineer for approval. The dust proofing would occur in August prior to Football season, with an application lasting 3-4 months.

Mr. Liberman asked about the chemicals used in the dust treatment, with concerns that his and other kids play in this area.

Wolters Field neighbor Mr. Fassett asked about using water treatment on each date the Lane will be used, versus the chemical application. He noted this alternative would be cheaper and safer. There was general agreement by the residents on the Committee for consideration of the water treatment option.

The district agreed to check on the viability of this alternative approach.

Mr. Helander complemented Mr. Rowley on his cooperative attitude.

Co-Chair Gordon brought up the desire of the district to use Athletic Lane for parking for a small number of 'overflow' [Spring-spring](#) athletic Events. Residents were opposed to this idea and suggested various solutions to help mitigate the parking challenges (e.g., car pooling, shuttle busses, moving busses, etc.).

A request was made to paint the small old structure next to Athletic Lane. Jon Rowley agreed to follow up on this.

f. Neighborhood Communications

Co-Chair Gordon provided an update on the increased and improved communications regarding Wolters Field. The group was appreciative of the efforts but requested more use of written publications to communicate key information, given that many residents in the area do not use email/computer.

Specifically, requests were made to include future communications about event dates and Wolters Field Advisory Group meeting and member solicitation in publications such as the Local Tribune, the Landmark and the Highlander magazine.

Co-Chair Gordon agreed to follow-up with the District's communications director.

g. Sound System and Sound-Related Topics

Co-Chair Gordon provided an update on the new speaker purchased and installed on the East side of the field, facing west, to be primarily used for playing warm-up music.

Jon Rowley explained how this new speaker is used for warm-up music, and the warm-up music is limited to 15 minutes for Varsity only. Jeff Gilbert commented that on at least one occasion he heard music going for approximately 40 minutes.

Some resident members of the Group, and audience members, had various comments about both the music and use of the PA system. Some individuals complained that the sound continues to be too loud. One individual audience member stated that he believes the district has done a great job with the PA system, and that sometimes the sound isn't loud enough.

Mr. Liberman shared how he's okay with use of the PA system for football, but believes it shouldn't be used for other sports.

Ms. Goldstein shared that different neighbors have different perspectives, and shared her pleasure with being able to hear music and the PA system when sports are occurring.

Ms. McMahon and Mr. Rowley commented about the importance of athletics and activities for kids, sharing statistics about how kids who participate have higher GPAs, and lower hospitalizations, as well as the high correlation of athletes and perfect attendance in school. They shared that for some kids, their organized athletic participation ends in high school, and it's important for all of these athletes, not just football players, to have a positive and impactful experience.

Mr. Helander suggested the District gets creative and that there should be a way to point the speakers differently (e.g., at Park Avenue), to alleviate the noise to neighbors.

Co-Chair Gordon commented on how the District has a relationship with different Sound consultants, and that she could see if they could look at our system and suggest any solutions to reduce sounds to neighbor without negatively impacting the student and fan experience.

Discussion also occurred on the sound and length of the horn at the end of periods.

[Finally, a discussion was held about the issues with the Pom Pons and fans not being able to hear their music during football half time shows. Jon R. explained that, this past fall, he and Tom K. ultimately brought in additional speakers to resolve the sound issue. The Advisory Group and attending neighbors were very supportive of adding the necessary additional sound during football half time shows.](#)

h. **2016 Annual Report Preparation**

Co-Chair Holleman explained the Ordinance requirement for the co-chairs to issue an annual report at the end of each school year. She commented on how we will be preparing this over the next month or so.

V. **Other Business**

a. **Creation of Wolters Field Usage Highlights**

Pursuant to a suggestion from Mr. Liberman, we agreed to create a summary of the

various Wolters Field-related agreements that have been made between the District and the neighbors. In addition to clarifying what these agreements are, and when/how they were entered into, this documentation will assist with future leader transitions.

We agreed to create a subcommittee to work on this summary, with the first meeting in August. Mr. Helander and Mr. Liberman agreed to be on this subcommittee. Co-Chairs Holleman and Gordon will follow-up to fill the rest of the subcommittee and to schedule the first meeting.

b. Follow-up on Security Lighting

Co-Chair Gordon communicated that lights are on from dusk to dawn for security reasons, using 35-watt LED bulbs. Shields have just been installed on the east side of the athletic building to help dampen the lighting impact on neighbors.

Mr. Liberman stated that there is one “orange light” in the Wolters Field parking lot that is a nuisance and asked the district to look into the situation. Mr. Liberman also stated that the lights from the field don’t bother his family since he has window blinds he can close.

c. Next Regular Meeting

Co-Chair Holleman shared that we’ve tentatively scheduled the next meeting of the Wolters Field Advisory Group to be held on Thursday, November 3, 2016. She asked members of the group to get back to her right away if anyone currently has conflicts on that date.

VI. Business from Public

Mr. Fassett raised a safety concern about an incident this spring, where lights were turned off before everyone had left a sporting event. He suggested the District just leave the lights on to allow safe exiting.

Mr. Rowley explained the situation and acknowledged the challenge of abiding by the twilight rules (lights off by 8pm with no extra time for reduced lighting), given the unpredictable length of sporting events, particularly track and field.

Mr. David Greenberg stated how the challenges of Wolters Field led to his desire to sell his house and move out of the neighborhood.

VII. Adjournment

The Wolters Field Advisory Group adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:00 pm.